

# Department of Human Services

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\*Important story at this spot

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## Michigan is neglecting its most vulnerable kids

Saturday, April 21, 2007

By Sharon Emery

Booth Newspapers

It's hard to imagine a role the state of Michigan has failed to fulfill more spectacularly than that of nurturing parent.

It's stingy with its affections -- as evidenced by the woeful lack of foster and adoptive families for the 19,000 children in its child welfare system.

And, sadder still, it's stingy with its resources in providing for them.

Gov. Jennifer Granholm has proposed spending \$35 million more on child welfare in 2008, but that and other new spending initiatives assume passage of nearly \$1.6 billion in new tax revenue for the 2007 and 2008 fiscal years.

Until lawmakers make decisions on revenue, there really can be no decisions on spending.

When it comes to its neediest and most vulnerable children, Michigan appears bankrupt on several counts.

Which is why the state finds itself in U.S. District Court in Detroit, defending itself in a class-action lawsuit brought by Children's Rights, a nonprofit advocacy group that has forced foster care changes in several states.

The charge? Basically that the state has subjected foster care children to the same kind of neglect and abuse it was supposed to be saving them from. Cases cited in the suit include that of a 16-year-old girl who over 14 years was in 10 different placements, some of which subjected her to physical and sexual abuse.

Michigan stands charged with failing to provide basic physical and mental care; failing to avoid repeated moves of children from home to home; failing to adequately monitor children's safety; and failing to address high worker caseloads and turnover.

Department of Human Services officials, who administer the child welfare system, ended settlement talks with Children's Rights on April 11, saying the cash-strapped state has no funds to back them up on any agreement they might make. And U.S. District Judge Nancy Edmunds has denied the state's request to dismiss the suit.

Michigan's child welfare system is in quite a fix. The state's own reports have already leveled heavy condemnation.

There's the 2005 state Auditor General's Office finding that the state had failed to do periodic criminal background checks on adults caring for foster children, and failed to ensure that caseworkers performed required visits to check on the safety of foster children.

There are years of reports from the Office of Children's Ombudsman, all concluding that caseworker failure to follow laws and procedures is the leading reason why the child welfare system fails. Among the reasons for that failure: inexperienced, undertrained, burned-out workers with insufficient supervision.

Today, as an agency fulfilling various human needs in an economic downturn that just won't quit, DHS is

defined by two intersecting lines that form a big, imposing X.

One line slices diagonally in an ever ascending trajectory. That line represents caseload, up about 46 percent since 2000.

The other line is DHS work force, descending about 27 percent, down more than 3,500 jobs.

Nineteen months ago DHS Director Marianne Udow testified before the Senate Families and Human Services Committee that the agency needed at least 160 more child protection workers, at a cost of about \$11 million, to get caseloads down to the recommended 15-to-1 ratio.

She got 51 more child protection workers this year. Caseloads are now between 25-to-1 and 60-to-1. Close, but probably not good enough to win in court. A June 2008 trial date has been set.

Children's Rights had been working with the state to make reforms before filing the lawsuit in August, but the group said progress was too slow.

As Udow told lawmakers back in September of 2005: "Resources are a very important part of this problem. In every state where there have been challenges to the system ... the system has been improved with significant increases in resources."

Waiting longer is unlikely to make that statement any less true.

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## Foster care laws examined

Judges: Kids damaged too much

April 22, 2007

BY JACK KRESNAK

FREE PRESS STAFF WRITER

Mark Jansen is proud of his votes nearly 10 years ago as a state representative for a package of 10 bills designed to shorten the time Michigan children spend in foster care.

The legislation -- named after then-Lt. Gov. Connie Binsfeld and approved without a single no vote -- made it easier for judges to terminate the rights of abusive or neglectful parents so their kids could have a better chance of being adopted. The bills were signed into law in December 1997.

While adoption rates have risen since then, Jansen, now a Republican state senator from Grand Rapids who chairs the Senate's Families and Human Services Committee, and other lawmakers are learning about the unintended consequences of the stricter laws.

The number of so-called legal orphans -- children who have no parents and little hope of ever being adopted -- also is rising. That number has more than doubled -- from 788 in 1996 to 1,624 in 2005. The number was even higher in 2004, when 1,725 children fell into that category.

Many ultimately age out of the system without a family or support network to start their adult lives.

State Department of Human Services spokeswoman Maureen Sorbet said that in 2006, 536 foster children aged out of Michigan's system without being adopted, up from 462 in 2005.

While the state Department of Human Services and private agencies markedly increased adoptions, they have been unable to keep up with the influx of children considered unadoptable because of age, behavior or medical problems or who are part of large sibling groups.

Studies of the nation's foster care systems have concluded that these children are more likely to drop out of school, be unemployed and commit crimes.

Jansen, whose committee heard a presentation on the problem last week from Michigan Supreme Court Justice Maura Corrigan and Wexford County Probate Court Judge Kenneth Tacoma, said the state may have gone too far in the name of protecting children.

"It made sense back then," Jansen said of the Binsfeld laws. "I think we're saying now, 'Hey, we overdid it.' There are some ramifications now."

Tacoma, who first sounded an alarm about the problem in an April 2006 article in the Michigan Family Law Journal, said many of these children end up with nothing after years of foster care.

"They're aging out, and they've got nobody," Tacoma said. "Most of them are ending up in some kind of institution and many of them graduate immediately to jail."

After Corrigan saw Tacoma's article, she formed a group to study the laws. The group's proposals would scale back provisions of the Binsfeld laws.

"We've got this whole pool of kids that are just being pushed through the system," Corrigan said. "We can undo this self-inflicted wound to our state and to the children of our state by making some changes."

Corrigan, Tacoma and Chief Oakland County Family Court Judge James Alexander recommended that judges be given more discretion, particularly in cases where children are older and for whom there is little hope of adoption.

They also want the law to require judges to consult with children -- in age-appropriate manners -- before deciding whether to end parental rights. Typically, family court judges rely on lawyers appointed to represent kids to determine what is in their best interest. Tacoma argues that judges should be able to talk directly to kids.

Jim Hennessey, director of children's services for the state DHS, said the agency helped Corrigan's group and agrees with many of its recommendations.

The proposals "link very well to our child welfare improvement plan," Hennessey said. "Our plan also contains a provision for guardianship subsidy which, if enacted, would greatly increase the number of children who can achieve permanency through guardianship."

Permanent guardianships would mean that children would grow up outside of their parents' home but retain a legal connection in order to preserve their rights of inheritance or to maintain emotional connections to their parents.

Richard Wexler, executive director of the National Coalition for Child Protection Reform and a critic of Michigan's child protection system, called the proposals "small steps in the right direction."

"It is the first public acknowledgment that the Binsfeld laws were a horrible mistake," Wexler said. "But even these revisions don't address the worst legacy of Binsfeld: The take-the-child-and-run mentality, which still dominates Michigan child welfare, causing the state to take thousands of children from their homes needlessly every year, often in cases where family poverty is confused with neglect."

One problem is that in terminating parental rights, judges often cut off the children's connection to other relatives, including grandparents, aunts and uncles, even siblings. Legal orphans also miss out on any inheritances or Social Security benefits they might be eligible for if they kept a legal connection to their biological families.

Stacey Baker of Allen Park lost permanent custody of her five children in June 2006 after her husband molested one of her twin stepdaughters. Baker said she was accused of failing to protect her children because, on her lawyer's advice, she allowed her husband to live in the home after the police began investigating.

Baker said the abused girl, now 12, has been in a series of mental hospitals and no one from her family is allowed to visit her. Because Baker's adolescent daughter is institutionalized with mental problems, there is little prospect that anyone would want to adopt her.

"The system locks out grandparents, aunts, uncles and the rest of the children's family," Baker said. "I thought our laws state that family is first but not in any case I know."

"Someone out there has got to be the voice of these children and put an end to this messed-up system."

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Apr 22, 3:54 PM EDT

## State tackles problem of foster children missing out on college

By DAVID EGGERT

Associated Press Writer

ALBION, Mich. (AP) -- College student Stacey Kline was depressed and out of money, ignoring phone calls and staring at an empty refrigerator when she got a much-needed knock on her apartment door a month ago.

It was Lynda Naylor, a student services administrator at Wayne County Community College. Naylor and her husband stocked Kline's apartment in Detroit with groceries and gave the 22-year-old money for the bus.

"She was the first person to believe in me," says Kline, a victim of sexual abuse who was kicked out of a foster care home at 14 before selling drugs, working multiple jobs, living at friends' houses and bouncing around countless high schools. "They're like the family I never had."

Kline is one of the 450 teenagers who each year "age out" of Michigan's foster system when they turn 18. These teens are legal adults with neither an adoptive nor a blood-relation family to support them, financially or emotionally.

Kline hopes to beat the odds that face ex-foster children by graduating with an associate's degree in counseling in June. She acknowledges she would have quit school if not for help from Naylor - who bought food and bus fare for Kline with her own money - and others. That makes Kline's story important for state officials determined to see more foster youth with college degrees.

Social workers, college representatives and key advocates met last week at a special summit in Albion to hear from Kline, other foster alumni and experts. The state wants to remove the barriers that prevent 90 percent of college-age foster kids from going to college.

The numbers are sobering.

Young adults aging out of the foster system are less likely to be employed than their peers - and they're less likely to be able to afford rent or utilities. They're more likely to be homeless, have mental health problems and be incarcerated.

Seventy percent want to go to college, but just 20 percent go and only 5 percent graduate.

"They need the support of a caring adult," says Marianne Udow, director of the state Department of Human Services. "They need a permanent connection, somebody to guide them, somebody to help them make those basic decisions. Someone they can call when their car breaks down and they don't know what to do."

In a report to the state Legislature advocating more help for teens aging out of the foster system, a 45-member task force highlights higher education. One proposal would waive tuition for former foster children enrolled in Michigan's public universities and community colleges. Another goal is providing year-round housing stipends so students can tap other financial aid to help cover food, books, transportation and child care.

Udow says the challenge is more complex than just providing free tuition.

Where do ex-foster children go when dorms close for winter, spring and summer breaks? Who helps high schoolers navigate the befuddling form to apply for federal financial aid for college?

Maurice Webb, a 21-year-old from Romulus who expects to graduate from Ferris State University in December with a bachelor's in social work, aged out of the foster system at 19, a year into college.

He's getting by with help from a special voucher of up to \$5,000 a year for foster children. But since leaving the system, he's dealt with the pressures of college nearly on his own.

One easy change, Webb says, would be telling colleges which students come from foster care. Having an on-campus counselor or mentor - even other former foster kids in college - to guide students through paperwork and other daily decisions would be helpful, he adds.

"We're not looking for handouts," Webb says. "We're not looking for someone to walk us down the street. We're looking for the opportunity ... so we can walk into our destiny place. College is that place."

Naylor says it's not just about kids leaving the system and being told to get a job or go to school with no skill sets. They may think of themselves as "throwaways" and have low self-esteem. Having an advocate at college can be the difference between success and failure.

"We all need some help," says Naylor, noting that grown adults still get support from their parents and families.

Michigan Supreme Court Justice Maura Corrigan, a longtime advocate for foster children, says a serious problem is how often kids are moved from home to home and therefore school to school. Switching schools can bring incorrect placements and credits

along with the typical uncertainty of a new school, new classes and new faces.

Kline estimates attending at least six schools since age 14.

The state wants to have education planners helping foster youth think about college, and hopes to upgrade a statewide database to reduce delays in transferring school records when those students change K-12 schools. Officials also are looking at ways to create a support system for foster youth who enroll in college.

A big concern - and a familiar one for the foster care system - is money. The state's budget deficit is forcing state departments to cut spending. There may not be support for new or expanded programs.

Udow, however, says policymakers and lawmakers must find additional resources now or watch as foster children left to fend for themselves end up in prison or on public assistance.

"We end up paying, and we end up paying much more down the road," Udow says.

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Published April 22, 2007

## Teenage suspect in killing led life of 'tragedy'

Since age 11, Mack lived in series of youth, foster homes

Kevin Grasha  
Lansing State Journal

### What's next

- A judge has ordered Thomas Joseph Mack to undergo testing to determine if he is competent to stand trial.
- Competency as well as criminal responsibility tests will be conducted at the Center for Forensic Psychiatry in Ypsilanti. No further court dates have been scheduled.

When Thomas Mack was 11, his mother gave up her parental rights and turned him over to the state.

He never knew his father.

He has lived in a half-dozen foster homes and two youth homes.

These details were revealed in court records about the 15-year-old who was arrested earlier this month and charged with shooting his younger foster brother to death.

Mack is an emotionally and psychologically troubled boy who could be violent - but who also is caring and desperate for affection, people who know him say.

He blamed himself for his mother giving up custody.

"The tragedy of his life shouldn't be suffered by anybody," said Ina Twenter, a retired Lansing teacher.

Authorities have charged Mack with murder in the shooting death of 14-year-old Daniel Brock Austin.

The shooting happened April 3 in a Lansing apartment where their foster parents' son lived.

Mack is charged as an adult.

The boys' foster parents, Steve and Judy Stragier of Lansing, would not comment for this story.

A judge on April 16 ordered Mack to undergo competency tests to determine if he should stand trial.

Mack has received psychiatric and psychological therapy, his attorney, Keith Watson, said at the court hearing. Watson did not want to comment for this story.

Mack had lived in motel rooms, trailers and shelters before enrolling at Attwood Elementary School, which he attended from 1996 to 2000, said Twenter, who taught him for a year. She described Mack, who was in the school's special education program, as a "loving, caring young man, who had severe emotional problems."

She said he would act out when under stress.

"His mother tried to do the best she could, but she didn't have the ability to take care of him," Twenter said.

A few times a month, Attwood Principal Patricia Fitzpatrick recalled, either she or a teacher drove him home because no one came to pick him up.

Mack's jail photo, Fitzpatrick said, doesn't appear much different than the photograph of the 6-year-old boy in her archives.

"He had a warm, loving heart," she said, "that lived in an environment of disharmony and tragedy."

### **Set fire to trailer**

In October 2000, a few months after Mack stopped attending Attwood, he was placed in the temporary custody of Ingham County family court, according to records obtained by the Lansing State Journal.

Mack had set fire to a trailer, where he and his mother, Linda Coleman, were living, court documents say.

The trailer was condemned.

Coleman said her son was physically abusive to her, the documents say: "Linda has called Protective Services, Attwood school personnel, Community Mental Health and the Lansing Police Department on numerous occasions expressing her inability to control Thomas."

In June 2001, after about eight months in specialized foster care, Mack returned to live with his mother and her boyfriend.

But his behavior again became erratic.

He set fire to an empty trailer, punched a hole in his bedroom ceiling, and stole money and cigarettes. He was barred from staying at respite homes, which provide temporary care and shelter, amid claims he tore up mattresses and urinated in air vents, court documents say.

### **Mother chose boyfriend**

In September 2001, at an emergency removal family court hearing, Coleman said her boyfriend would no longer allow Mack in the home. She chose to stay with her boyfriend and have her son removed.

"He's very violent towards his mother. She can't handle him," Judge Janelle Lawless wrote.

Coleman has declined to comment.

Mack was sent to a St. Vincent Catholic Charities home for children. Four months later, he was sent to a Grand Rapids home for troubled youth.

It is not clear why.

By 2003, Coleman had voluntarily given up parental rights.

In August 2004, he was back in a foster home, but not doing well, demonstrating dangerous behavior like hunting animals, telling neighbors he was homeless. One court document noted he was "almost out of control."

He was placed again at the St. Vincent Catholic Charities children's home and at least one more foster home, from which he briefly ran away, before being admitted to the Stragiers' home in October 2005.

He was doing well with the Stragiers, according to court documents. He was serving as an older brother and role model for his two foster brothers - one of whom was Daniel Austin.

At the last hearing in family court, in February, it was reported that Mack's behavior had been relatively good.

He had joined the swim team at Everett High School, several people who know him said.

A notation in a court document says Mack was "stabilizing."

Contact Kevin Grasha at 267-1347 or [kgrasha@lsj.com](mailto:kgrasha@lsj.com).

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Published April 21, 2007

## Day care owner's husband faces trial on 7 sex charges

Lansing man, 59, stands accused of molesting 3 girls

Kevin Grasha  
Lansing State Journal

### What's Next

- Robin Terence Wood will stand trial on charges he molested two girls who attended his wife's home day care, as well as another girl who was friends with children in the home.
- Wood faces two counts of first-degree criminal sexual conduct and five counts of second-degree criminal sexual conduct involving three girls.

A 59-year-old Lansing man will stand trial on charges he molested two young girls who attended his wife's home day care, a judge ruled Friday.

Robin Terence Wood also will stand trial in another case involving a 10-year-old girl, who authorities say did not regularly attend the day care, but was friends with children in the home. He is charged with seven counts of criminal sexual conduct.

At a hearing Friday, two girls, ages 4 and 5, testified via video from a separate room inside the courthouse.

The media was barred from the courtroom, where Wood and his attorney, John Frawley, watched the girls' testimony on a TV screen.

That was done "so the children didn't have to see him," Assistant Prosecutor Lisa McCormick said after the hearing.

Frawley says his client assisted in caring for the children and might apply medications or wipe them.

But he did not molest them.

At Friday's hearing, a second-degree criminal sexual conduct charge involving one of the girls was dropped because of lack of evidence.

"I'm happy in terms of the way things are going," Frawley said, adding that witness statements continue to evolve.

He would not discuss the content of the girls' testimony.

Police closed the day care in January, after a parent notified the state Department of Human Services about possible crimes at the day care run by Wood's wife, Mary.

Her state license has been revoked.

After Friday's hearing, Mary and Robin Wood held hands as they walked from the courtroom. Mary Wood declined to comment, saying only, "I wish I could."

Robin Wood, who faces up to life in prison, is free on a \$25,000 bond.

The two girls knew Wood as "Papa Robin," according to testimony Friday after the courtroom was opened.

The 4-year-old girl's father testified his daughter attended the day care five days a week, from November 2005 until it closed in January.

He was likely called to support elements of his daughter's testimony.

He told McCormick his daughter took naps while there.

Contact Kevin Grasha at 267-1347 or [kgrasha@lsj.com](mailto:kgrasha@lsj.com).

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April 21, 2007

## Daycare owner accused of sexually abusing children

**The Associated Press**

**ADRIAN --** The owner of a home daycare business was ordered Friday to stand trial on 77 felony counts, including 45 accusing him of first-degree criminal sexual conduct involving children under age 13, police said.

Douglas J. Clark, 52, waived his preliminary examination in Lenawee County District Court where Adrian police were prepared to testify about videotapes and other evidence against him.

Judge Natalia M. Koselka ordered Clark bound over to Circuit Court, where he is to be arraigned May 2, The Daily Telegram of Adrian reported in Saturday editions. He was returned to the county jail, where he has been held on a \$5 million bond since shortly after his arrest March 9.

Clark operated Guardian Family Daycare from his home in Adrian, about 50 miles southwest of Detroit. Videotapes allegedly recorded by Clark show him sexually abusing at least three infants, police said.

Police began an investigation after being contacted by a parent of a child at the center.

If convicted of any of the first-degree criminal sexual conduct charges, Clark would face a maximum life prison term. Other charges against Clark include five counts of second-degree criminal sexual conduct and three counts of child sexually abusive activity.

The Michigan Department of Human Services suspended Clark's license last month. The notice said Clark had first obtained a certificate of registration to operate a day care in his home for six children beginning in July 2002.

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04/22/2007

Week in Review

## GRAND TRAVERSE

### ***Death of baby being investigated***

KINGSLEY — Sheriff's deputies were awaiting results of a 5-month-old girl's autopsy to determine how she died and the next steps in their investigation.

Lilly Ann-Rose Martin was in bed with her mother at their Kingsley home when her mother discovered the child unresponsive and not breathing around 5:26 a.m. April 14, Grand Traverse County Undersheriff Nathan Alger said.

The mother called 911 and preformed CPR on the infant before Lilly was rushed by ambulance to Munson Medical Center, where she was pronounced dead at 6:13 a.m.

Deputies attended the infant's autopsy at a Grand Rapids hospital Monday, where they hoped to get more answers. Alger would not comment on the baby's medical history, but said the preliminary autopsy report likely will steer their investigation.

### ***Man found guilty in child porn case***

TRAVERSE CITY — Jurors found a Traverse City man guilty of numerous counts of possessing child pornography after a two-day trial.

Jurors deliberated for about three hours before they convicted Gregory J. Wolfe, 49, April 13 of five counts of possessing child pornography, court records show.

Wolfe was charged with seven felonies in September after police searched his home and discovered computers loaded with sexually explicit images of children. Jurors found Wolfe not guilty of distributing or promoting child pornography and using a computer to commit a crime, records show.

Sheriff's officers investigated Wolfe after Yahoo representatives found images of child porn uploaded to a folder on their servers.

Circuit Court Judge Thomas Power is scheduled to sentence Wolfe on May 11.

## ***Man accused of beating, choking girl***

TRAVERSE CITY — A Traverse City man faces multiple felony charges after he allegedly assaulted his 13-year-old daughter.

Robert Miles, 39, is charged with second-degree child abuse, felonious assault and other charges after police alleged he punched and choked his daughter until she lost consciousness at his home April 12, records show.

Miles was lodged in the Grand Traverse County jail Tuesday on 10 percent of a \$100,000 bond. Miles, who has several drug-related convictions, is charged as a habitual offender.



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# The Daily Telegram

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**MONDAY APRIL 23, 2007** Last modified: *Friday, April 20, 2007 10:43 PM EDT*

## Child sex hearing waived

Douglas Jay Clark, who will be arraigned May 2, faces 77 felony charges including 45 counts of first-degree criminal sexual conduct.

By [Dennis Pelham](#)

Daily Telegram Staff Writer

ADRIAN — An Adrian day care operator accused of sexually abusing children waived a preliminary examination Friday in Lenawee County District Court where Adrian police were prepared to testify about videotapes and other evidence against him.

Douglas Jay Clark, 52, acknowledged a waiver agreement announced by public defender John Glaser during a brief courtroom appearance. Judge Natalia M. Koselka ordered Clark bound over to circuit court to face a possible trial on 77 felony charges that have been filed against him. He is to be arraigned in circuit court on May 2.

Clark was returned to jail where he has been held since he was arrested at the start of an Adrian police investigation on March 9. A \$5 million bond was set shortly after his arrest. Videotapes police said Clark recorded by himself show him sexually abusing at least three infants. Additional charges he was arraigned on March 30 involve three more children, including a teenage boy to whom Clark allegedly sent sexual Internet messages that sparked the investigation.

Detective Vincent Emrick said an evaluation of a computer in Clark's home yielded messages he sent on March 9, believing he was chatting with the teen while the boy's mother was actually on the computer with Clark. She called police, and officers reported finding incriminating videotapes and other evidence at Clark's home-based day care business, Guardian Family Daycare, at 1013 Erie St.

Publicity on the case drew calls from people saying they were victims or knew of others who were victims of sexual abuse dating back years. Detective Sgt. Lynn Courington said Friday some of the complaints could not be prosecuted because a 20-year statute of limitations had passed.

Clark first obtained a license for his business from the Michigan Department of Human Services in 2002, but Courington said he was aware of Clark providing child care services for at least a decade before then. Clark's state license was last renewed in 2005.

Adrian police received two earlier complaints about Clark during 2003 that Courington said did not result in prosecutions. The family of one child withdrew a complaint, he said. The second case was closed after the Lenawee County prosecutor's office found the evidence was insufficient to authorize charges.

Nothing was stated about plea bargain offers during Clark's court appearance on Friday. An agreement is likely to be pursued in circuit court to resolve the case without a trial where video evidence would be shown to a jury. If convicted of any of 45 counts of first-degree criminal sexual conduct, Clark would face a maximum life prison term.

Other charges filed against Clark are five counts of second-degree criminal sexual conduct, three counts of child sexually abusive activity and one count each of using a computer to commit a felony, extortion, possession of a firearm during the commission of a felony and possession of marijuana with intent to deliver.

-- CLOSE WINDOW--

# Molester receives 3 life terms

## Ohio man said he paid boys for sex

*April 21, 2007*

BY BEN SCHMITT  
FREE PRESS STAFF WRITER

Ted Lamborgine doesn't consider himself a child predator.

Before receiving three life prison sentences Friday for sex-related charges involving metro Detroit boys, he tried to explain to a judge that the sexual acts had been consensual for money.

Wayne County Circuit Judge Annette Berry didn't want to hear it.

"May God have mercy on your soul," she said.

"Guess what they do to people like you in prison?" she added. "You are the classic predator. You don't look like a monster. You preyed upon our most vulnerable."

Lamborgine, 66, of Parma, Ohio, had pleaded guilty to 15 sex-related charges involving boys as young as 11.

Last month, he rejected a plea deal that would have required him to submit to a polygraph test on the four unsolved Oakland County child deaths in exchange for dismissing 13 of the 15 charges.

Had he taken the deal, he would have faced a possible 15-year minimum sentence with a maximum sentence to be determined, Assistant Wayne County Prosecutor Robert Moran said.

State Police Detective Sgt. Garry Gray said Lamborgine is a suspect in the child killings that caused regional anxiety in the 1970s.

On Friday, Lamborgine said he never forced himself on the victims and they were paid for sexual acts. Moran countered:

"You can never justify having sex with a child," he said. "Some of these victims' lives are ruined."

One victim appeared in court Friday and showed Berry needle marks on his arm from previous drug abuse. He said he has nightmares about Lamborgine and has done prison time as a result of how the traumatic experience affected his life.

Another victim, who was 13 when he was molested, sent a letter that Moran read in court.

"You said I would never be loved. I am," the man wrote in the letter. "You said my life would never be normal. It is."

The cases involve five victims under age 15.

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Lansing State Journal

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## **Auction to raise funds to fight child abuse**

The Children's Trust Fund, a statewide non-profit organization dedicated to the prevention of child abuse and neglect, is hosting its fifth annual "Cherish the Children" Û The Ultimate Fantasy Auction on Tuesday, May 1, at the Breslin Center, Michigan State University. Doors open and silent auctions begin at 5 p.m. followed by a brief program and live auction at 7 p.m.

Tickets are \$100 (of which \$85 is tax-deductible). Proceeds raised will benefit the Children's Trust Fund to bring an end to child abuse. For additional information and/or to order tickets call 1-800-CHILDREN or visit [www.michigan.gov/ctf](http://www.michigan.gov/ctf).



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## Council seeking nominees for honoring

GRAND LEDGE — Since its inception in 1985, the Child Abuse Prevention Council of Eaton County has presented an annual community award recognizing an outstanding person or organization in Eaton County for their contribution and service to children during the year. The past 21 recipients of this award come from a variety of backgrounds from a grandmother, a foster parent, a community volunteer caring for children, a judge, a police officer, and a local business owner, just to name a few. While the backgrounds of these remarkable individuals are very different, they all had one thing in common: they made a difference in the lives of area children.

The past 21 recipients of this prestigious community award are as follows: 1986 — Stephen A. Hayden, 1987 — Richard W. Hill, 1988 — Richard Jarman, 1989 — Verlie Shaver, 1990 — Ruth Rypstra, 1991 — Pat Nicol, 1992 — Rick Wahl, 1993 — Judith Allswede, 1994 — Dave and Donna Colegrove, 1995 — Thomas Eveland, 1996 — Kathleen Herrick, 1997 — Mary Zollner, 1998 — Dale McGilvra, 1999 — Rick Jones, 2000 — Kaye Sorenson, 2001 — Dave Barron, 2002 — Terry "Tate" Mix, 2003 — Charlotte 4 TC, 2004 — Dorothy Childs, Stephanie Hudson, 2005 — Ronda Rucker.

The Child Abuse Council is now accepting nominations from the community for the 2005 Service To Children Award. The deadline for applications is Feb., 17, 2007.

— *Child Abuse Prevention Council of Eaton County*

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## KALAMAZOO GAZETTE

### Denial allows domestic violence to continue

Sunday, April 22, 2007

Each year, millions of Americans experience a serious assault by someone who said they loved them. Too often, these assaults end in tragedy.

In Kalamazoo, the latest incident claimed the lives of a woman and her two children.

Investigators said Bobbi Davis Jackson, 32, and her sons, 8-year-old Jonathan Mayfield and 10-year-old Lorenzo Mayfield Jr., were shot and killed by Jackson's boyfriend, 38-year-old Shawn David Junius, who then shot and killed himself, the Kalamazoo Department of Public Safety said.

All four were found dead at about 12:30 a.m. Thursday in a first-floor bedroom of a house in the 700 block of Skinner Drive. Deputy Chief Mike McCaw said a gun was found near Junius.

How could this have happened? We may never know exactly what transpired in this case, but we do know that the cycle of violence can be broken.

First, however, we must acknowledge its existence.

Some people choose to deny this problem exists or they assume it doesn't go on in their neighborhood or in their social circle. They couldn't be more wrong. Assaults come from every socioeconomic class, race, religion, educational background and profession.

Others are misinformed, wrongly believing victims provoke the attacks or that substance abuse is its cause.

These beliefs only block us from breaking the cycle. We know there are people in our community dealing with abusive relationships right now. To get help, call the YWCA 24-hour crisis hotline at 345-3036.

People have the ability to break the cycle of violence before it ends in tragedy. And we have the ability to help them.

But, first, all of us must acknowledge this pervasive problem.

And then all of us must refuse to tolerate it.

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## **Teen charged with killing his school principal once challenged a teacher to a fight**

BARABOO, Wis. Proceedings are under way to determine if a Michigan teen should be tried as an adult for the shooting of a principal.

A teacher testified at Eric Hainstock's hearing that the then 15-year-old challenged her to a fight over a pen being used as a spitball shooter.

Lawyers for the Wisconsin teen say he needs the psychological treatment that is available in the state's juvenile justice system. Prosecutors say Hainstock is likely to remain dangerous even when he's released from juvenile custody at the age of 25.

He could get life in prison if convicted as an adult.

Authorities say Hainstock shot principal John Klang three times as the two wrestled over a gun before the start of classes one day last September.

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## Greenville nursing home faces \$100,000 fine

Friday, April 20, 2007

By Nate Reens

The Grand Rapids Press

GREENVILLE -- Used properly, bedside rails can be a lifesaver for seniors suffering from dementia or restless tossing and turning that could send them dropping to the floor.

Or they could cause death when not specifically suited to fit a patient, as state Attorney General Mike Cox's office cited in fining Metron Integrated Health Systems' Greenville nursing home \$100,000 for violating standard guidelines.

A state monitor appointed last year to oversee operations at eight Metron facilities as a result of an investigation surrounding the 2005 death of Sarah Comer at a Big Rapids center levied the penalty, Cox said, for "negligence and carelessness." Metron is a chain of care centers based in Cascade Township,

Cox said staff at Greenville's Metron home failed to properly measure and install in a timely manner rails that could prevent injury or death.

"They didn't take the necessary steps to keep their patients safe, and our goal is to make sure the facilities are in compliance for the best possible care," said Matt Frendewey, a Cox spokesman. "Metron takes care of a lot of seniors, and we will bring them back in compliance with the law.

"This is a significant violation and the fine shows that."

Mark Piersma, Metron's president, could not be reached Thursday.

Cox said the monitor, private nurse Rose Coleman, found violations of several policies from Feb. 17 to March 29. Coleman was appointed as the monitor to watch over the centers as part of a settlement from a civil lawsuit alleging inadequate care and Medicaid fraud against Metron.

The penalty comes on the heels of Metron's Lamont center being fined \$5,000 last month for another bed rail problem.

A Kalamazoo center, now closed, was hit with a \$10,000 levy for bed rail violations in October 2006.

Bed rails, when not sized and maintained, can injure and kill as evidenced by five 1999 deaths in homes across the state, including Bernard Symanski in a Grandville care center.

Frances Grant, executive director of Citizens for Better Care, said patients can get trapped between a mattress and the safety rails. They are considered an unnecessary restraint unless doctor-ordered.

"There would be the potential of harm if they didn't have them installed correctly," Grant said.

Frendewey, Cox's spokesman, said no injuries were suffered by Metron patients before the corrective order.

The fine is the fourth since state oversight began. Coleman assessed the company's Allegan facility a \$4,500 penalty in March for failing to report an incident to the monitor that it reported to the state Department of Human Services.



Published April 22, 2007

[ From Charlotte Shopping Guide ]

## **Insurance program protects uninsured kids**

CHARLOTTE — Barry-Eaton Health Connections Clinic, a provider of primary health care for 1,500 adult uninsured residents of Barry and Eaton Counties, and a service of the Barry-Eaton District Health Department, supports the expansion of federal and state programs to cover uninsured children.

At issue is the fate of the State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP). For the past 10 years, SCHIP has provided health coverage to children whose parents are either not offered health insurance for their children through their job, or who cannot afford the insurance that is offered. More than six million children are covered by SCHIP nationwide. Over 500 children in Barry and Eaton counties are enrolled in Michigan's SCHIP program, MICHild. Many more children may be eligible for the program but have not yet enrolled.

"Too many children in our community and our nation are uninsured and do not receive the care they need," said June Gillespie, Clinic Supervisor. "There has never been a more important time for us to come together and support federal efforts to provide health coverage to children. Congress must continue to fund SCHIP and make America's uninsured their top priority."

Congress must reauthorize SCHIP in 2007 in order for the program to continue. President Bush, governors, and members of Congress are discussing budget figures for the program's future.

Experts say the current funding levels for these state programs — set in 1997 — are not adequate to keep up with the growing numbers of uninsured kids, so it will take an increase in federal funding to cover kids currently enrolled in these programs, with more money needed to cover more uninsured children.

Now in its fifth year, the Cover the Uninsured campaign is the largest mobilization in history to shine a national spotlight on the need to secure health coverage for all Americans. The centerpiece of the campaign is Cover the Uninsured Week, April 23-29. For more information, go to

[www.covertheuninsured.org](http://www.covertheuninsured.org).

Many children, even those in working families, are eligible for free or very low-cost health insurance through the MIChild or Healthy Kids programs. Families in Eaton County can apply for medical coverage for their children at the Department of Human Services, 1050 Independence Blvd. in Charlotte. Or call toll-free at (888) 988-6300.

- *Barry-Eaton Health Department.*

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April 23, 2007

## MiChild helping more adults

Program for uninsured kids providing coverage to 65K grown Michiganians.

**Kim Kozlowski / The Detroit News**

A public program designed for some of Michigan's 160,000 uninsured children is providing more health coverage for adults than youths. The federal-state initiative is spending more than three times the amount of money for adult coverage as it does for the purpose of the program, according to figures from the Michigan Department of Community Health.

The \$198 million program, known as MiChild, is designed to provide insurance to children whose families don't qualify for Medicaid but can't afford private insurance.

As Cover the Uninsured Week begins today, local health officials are attempting to enroll more uninsured children through numerous enrollment fairs. Several outreach efforts also are in place through United Way's 211 help line, Detroit Public Schools and Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan.

But health advocates say they lack advertising funds, which is why more could be done to market the program to working families. "We can and we should and we're going to do it," said Doug Halladay, spokesman for the Detroit Wayne County Health Authority, which coordinates Cover the Uninsured Week, sponsored by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation.

Now in its fifth year, the week highlights the 45 million uninsured Americans, including 9 million children. This year's focus on children comes as Congress debates reauthorizing the State Children's Health Insurance Program, which provides federal funds that cover 70 percent of MiChild's costs.

Jessica Luther of Royal Oak, a stay-at-home mother, wasn't aware of MiChild until a friend told her about it. Luther and her husband, a carpenter, were shelling out \$400 a month for private coverage that required them to pay 20 percent of their health services and didn't cover office visits for their daughters, Isabel, 5, and Sylvie, 10 months.

The costs became so overwhelming that the couple dropped the insurance. A few weeks later, they enrolled their daughters in MiChild, which covers all health care costs, including vision and dental, for a \$10 monthly premium.

"It's phenomenal," Luther said. "It's so much better. I am not worried if they have to go to the doctor and how can I juggle the bills this month."

In 2006, MiChild provided insurance for 32,782 children who live in families that are between 150 percent and 200 percent of the poverty level, which is a \$30,000 to \$37,000 annual income for a family of four.

The cost of covering the children was \$44 million.. The remaining \$154 million in 2006 was spent on insuring 65,273 adults with annual incomes of 35 percent of the poverty level, or \$3,430 a year.

Michigan was like many states and lost some of its federal funds when they weren't spent. Between 2000 and 2003, Michigan lost \$323 million that was distributed to other states.

To allow states more flexibility in their funding, the federal government approved projects for states to cover other uninsured populations.

In 2003, Michigan received federal approval to use the funding to cover adults with very low incomes -- \$3,049 annually -- so it could spend all of its funding. Eleven other states also use their funding to cover adults.

"We had to agree we would never turn away a child and we don't," said Paul Reinhart, Medicaid director in the Michigan Department of Community Health.

Some leaders say more needs to be done to insure all children.

"Health care should be a right to all Americans and particularly for our most vulnerable, our children," said the Rev. Dr. John Duckworth, pastor of Gethsemane Missionary Baptist Church in Westland.

*You can reach Kim Kozlowski at (313) 222-2024 or [kkozlowski@detnews.com](mailto:kkozlowski@detnews.com).*

### Health fairs

Numerous health fairs this week will help parents and their children with screenings and signups for public health insurance programs. Among them:

#### Today

10 a.m. to 4p.m., AIMHI Westside Health Resource Center, 21551 Fenkell, Detroit.

#### Tuesday

10 a.m.-2 p.m., Bowen Center, 52 Bagley, Pontiac  
10 a.m. -5 p.m., Tanger Outlet Mall, 1475 N. Burkhardt Road, Howell  
Noon to 6 p.m., First Presbyterian Church, 746 S. Saginaw, Flint  
3-8 p.m., Fellowship Chapel, 7707 W. Outer Drive, Detroit

#### Thursday

1-7 p.m., AIMHI Eastside Health Resource Center, 3360 Charlevoix, Detroit

2-6 p.m., Redford Community Center, 12121 Hemingway, Redford

**Friday**

9 a.m. to 4 p.m., Corinthian Baptist Church, 1725 Caniff, Hamtramck

9 a.m. to 1 p.m., Trinity Mission Baptist Church, 113-123 Wesson, Pontiac

9 a.m. to 3 p.m., Affirmations Gay & Lesbian Community Center, 290 W. Nine Mile, Ferndale

10 a.m. to 2 p.m., St. Paul AME Church, 2260 Hunt St., Detroit

For those who can't make the health fairs, call 211 to get screened for public health insurance.

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## Get more uninsured people covered

April 23, 2007

Strange bedfellows have become the norm. States are pushing to experiment. Presidential candidates have it on their agendas.

The subject: health insurance and the 47 million people in this country who don't have it. In a variety of occasionally odd alliances, some of the biggest corporations, unions and other groups are raising the clamor for change.

Yet even as wholesale reform becomes a widely agreed upon goal, Congress and the states must not ignore the differences they can make now. Chief among them is the opportunity Congress has this year -- as it renews the 10-year-old State Children's Health Insurance Program -- to help even more youngsters grow into strong, productive adults.

S-CHIP provides coverage to children and some parents in low-income families, who pay modest monthly fees and co-pays. In Michigan, it helps about 90,000 people. But that still leaves about 160,000 uninsured children here, two-thirds of whom are in households where at least one adult works full-time but does not have access to health insurance or simply can't afford it.

Skimping on health care for children is a foolish long-term plan for the country. Congress, operating again under pay-as-you-go rules, will have to do some serious juggling to increase S-CHIP funding. But the benefits of keeping children healthy are well worth it.

Meanwhile, the State of Michigan is still negotiating with the Bush administration over a statewide plan that would help as many as 550,000 uninsured residents gain health coverage. Roughly one in seven Americans lacks health insurance, even as the United States spends more per person on health care than any other country in the world. It's a system that fails both the dollar-and-cents test and any test of common sense, and the pressure for change can only grow.

*Cover the Uninsured Week, today through Sunday, includes health fairs, other events and enrollment outreach. Events are listed at [www.covertheuninsured.org](http://www.covertheuninsured.org). In southeast Michigan, call 211 to ask about free and low-cost coverage; from a cell phone, call 800-552-1183. Elsewhere in Michigan, call 888-988-6300.*

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Published April 22, 2007

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## DHS out of heating assistance funds

The Department of Human Services recently announced it is out of funds for energy crisis assistance for fiscal year 2007. Individuals receiving home heating credits will continue to receive assistance through September 2007, but new applications for energy crisis assistance will be denied due to lack of funds. DHS has provided low-income residents \$45.7 million for crisis assistance since October 2006. About \$1.9 million goes to Michigan families each week.

"Hundreds of thousands of Michigan families rely on energy assistance," said DHS Director Marianne Udow. "Energy costs continue to rise and families in low-income households are facing few choices."

For more information about LIHEAP and other DHS assistance programs, go to [www.michigan.gov/dhs](http://www.michigan.gov/dhs)

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Article published Apr 20, 2007

CAA collecting funds for low-income heat help  
The Enquirer

Now that the Michigan Department of Human Services has stopped taking applicants for the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program, which helps low-income individuals pay their utility bills, the Community Action Agency of South Central Michigan has been overwhelmed with clients looking for assistance.

CAA is accepting 2007 Walk for Warmth funds online at [www.caascm.org](http://www.caascm.org) and by mail until April 30. Walk for Warmth funds help low- to moderate-income individuals in Barry, Branch, Calhoun and St. Joseph counties pay their utility bills.

For more information on the CAA Walk for Warmth, visit [www.caascm.org](http://www.caascm.org) or call 877-422-2726.

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## KALAMAZOO GAZETTE

### Handy Dick Anson helps Loaves & Fishes

Saturday, April 21, 2007

Dick Anson is pretty handy with tools and knows his way around a warehouse. That has made him a valuable volunteer for Kalamazoo Loaves & Fishes, the community agency that provides emergency supplies of food to hungry families in need.

Anson, 71, of Richland Township, retired after 30 years as a city area truck driver for Roadway Express Inc. He now uses the skills he learned on the job to help Loaves & Fishes complete its mission of feeding the hungry and promoting the ability of hungry people to help themselves.

"I've got skills in operating lift trucks," Anson said, "and I was around warehouses a lot."

Anson also offers Loaves & Fishes his carpentry skills. "My dad was a carpenter," Anson said, explaining how he picked up his knack with tools. "That just comes naturally to me." Anson does maintenance chores, but last summer he and his Richland Township neighbor, Fred Yeager, tackled a major chore. They renovated one of the Loaves & Fishes offices. They picked the hottest part of the summer to put in a drop ceiling and do other remodeling. Loaves & Fishes has no air conditioning. "It was so hot," Anson said. "It was hotter than the dickens."

"Any little thing he can work on, he does," said Sue VanderMeer, Loaves & Fishes volunteer coordinator.

"I enjoy doing things for people," Anson said. "They're a good bunch down there and it's fun."

Anson recommends that other volunteers get involved at the community agency. He noted that the big annual postal food drive is set for May. "They need volunteers to work as phone screeners in the office," as well as other volunteers to handle the volume of food collected by postal employees, Anson said. They expect as much as 89,000 pounds of food will be donated in the drive. More information on volunteering is available from VanderMeer at 488-2617, extension 209.

Anson was born in Cooper Township and has lived in Richland Township for 50 years. He and his wife, Anne, have five children, seven grandchildren and two great-grandchildren.

Loaves & Fishes saluted Anson's work earlier this month when they presented him with the Willie Webster Volunteer Award at the organization's 25th annual meeting. Anson was humbled by the gesture.

"I'm not very big on getting awards," he said. "I just want to help."

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## Leaders to explain jobs project

Sunday, April 22, 2007

**JEAN SPENNER**

### THE SAGINAW NEWS

State and local leaders will take part in a Monday press conference to tout the new Jobs, Education and Training project.

The initiative -- designed to take a holistic approach to serving welfare recipients and helping them become self-sufficient -- started as a pilot project in Kent, Oakland, Sanilac and Wayne counties in 2006.

Saginaw County is among a recent expansion that includes 18 other counties.

The project will extend across the state by the end of 2008, said Colleen Steinman, a Lansing-based spokeswoman for the Department of Human Services. Rolling it out to the 19 counties serves 50 percent of the statewide clients, she said.

The plan is a joint venture of the Department of Human Services, the Department of Labor & Economic Growth and its agencies Michigan Works and Michigan Rehabilitation Services.

The 1:30 p.m. press conference takes place at the Hart State Office Building, 411 E. Genesee in downtown Saginaw.

"All of the agencies are involved in providing services," Steinman said.

Saginaw County Department of Human Services has operated the Job, Education and Training project for about three months, said Randy Barst, director for the county agency. He called it a common-sense approach to connect people who need to work with jobs.

"Previously our employment training program centered around the philosophy of find a job, any job," Barst said. "We just wanted people off of assistance and get them working. We found out that didn't work."

Many of the clients took menial jobs and eventually returned into the system, he said.

"They didn't have the skills to keep the job, didn't have the support systems in place to help them," Barst said. "The main tenets of the new program is that it allows people to receive training for jobs currently available in Michigan."

County offices of the state Department of Human Services, Rehabilitation Services and Michigan Works! will join to meet with cash recipients, Barst said.

"This will provide a structure of accountability," he said. "We will be trying to engage people who aren't cooperating to get them to understand the benefit of becoming self-sufficient."

Those who continue to refuse to cooperate may cause them to lose cash assistance.

Speakers at the press conference will include Marianne Udow, director of the state Department of Human Services; Andy Levin, deputy director of state Department of Labor & Economic Growth; Leonard Meisel, manager of Saginaw County's Michigan Rehabilitation Services office; Ed Oberski, director of the Saginaw-Midland-Bay Michigan Works!; Barst and a Saginaw County resident on board with the new project. v



## Paring welfare

Training, other services essential for hardest cases

### FLINT

#### THE FLINT JOURNAL FIRST EDITION

Monday, April 23, 2007

Although Michigan has pared its once awesome welfare load by about two-thirds from a decade ago, the rolls must be reduced still more under threat of federal penalty. But many of the approximately 88,000 cases that remain are tough ones that will not find resolution so easily.

These are in fair measure people besieged by illnesses both physical and mental, profound illiteracy, substance abuse and other barriers to work. Michigan has resisted capping their assistance, but impending federal sanctions have forced even Gov. Jennifer Granholm to adapt.

The strategy now must be to proceed as fairly as possible, which will take coordinated community efforts that bring to bear a strong commitment to both success and sensitivity.

The Department of Human Services reassures that sufficient social services and protections are in place. Let's hope so, for consequences will be severe. Aid recipients who don't comply by joining the job market within federal deadlines will lose benefits for 90 days the first time, another 90 days for a second failure, while a third infraction will bring on a 12-month cutoff.

The situation is all the more harsh considering Michigan's economy provides diminishing opportunities for decent-paying employment for those with marginal skills. Fortunately, most of these people qualify for various forms of other assistance, besides federal and state tax programs that funnel money to low-wage earners.

Of course the best option is if training efforts help uplift people at this level into better circumstances. The federal program Jobs, Education and Training, known as JET, will help recipients targeted for cutoff with skills development, child care and other help. Preliminary experience shows JET to be reasonably effective.

Notably, economic conditions and poor work skills and habits are not the only factors that bloat welfare rolls. Of 13,400 families on aid for more than four years, 97 percent are headed by single parents with children - a statistic that cannot be interpreted as coincidental. The rejection of marriage as the basic societal unit is indubitably a major contributor to poverty. It's a matter that generally is beyond the power of government to solve, but one that should be addressed in some quarters nonetheless.

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Article published Apr 23, 2007  
Suspected meth lab burns  
Police: House was vacant after arrest

By MOLLY MONTAG  
Times Herald

**KIMBALL TWP.**- Authorities are investigating the cause of a fire that started around 12:15 a.m. Sunday and destroyed a former adult foster-care home on Lapeer Road, police said.

Kimball Township Fire Chief John Gorski said the house was engulfed in flames when firefighters arrived. Flames could be seen from as far away as Interstate 69.

By Sunday afternoon, a brick chimney, burnt frame and a pile of charred wood were all that was left of the house.

Gorski said a cause is still undetermined and the investigation would continue this week.

"With everything falling into the basement and the crawl space, we didn't have a good chance to do an investigation," he said.

About 30 to 35 firefighters from Kimball, Kenockee, Clyde and Port Huron townships fought the fire. Gorski said the last firefighters left the scene around 7:30 a.m., nearly seven hours after they arrived.

St. Clair County sheriff Sgt. Tom Buckley said two St. Clair County sheriff detectives also are investigating the cause of the fire with assistance from the Michigan State Police.

"The fact that nobody was living there and most of the utilities were off automatically gives rise to some suspicion," Buckley said.

Nobody was home at the time of the fire, Buckley said.

The location, 6531 Lapeer Road, was formerly Pine Hill Adult Foster Care home. Residents were removed Feb. 9 while the state Department of Human Services conducted an investigation into the facility.

The Department of Human Service investigation came on the heels of the Feb. 6 discovery of what police described a suspected methamphetamine lab in a garage on the property.

Raymond Archie Laturno, Jr., 41, was charged with possessing a controlled substance, second offense, two counts of carrying a concealed weapon and driving with a suspended license.

Laturno is being held at the St. Clair County jail in Port Huron Township.

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# MORNING SUN

## Union Township eases daycare permit process

By MARK RANZENBERGER  
Sun Staff Writer

Union Township is in the process of simplifying the establishment of group day-care homes in the township.

Planning commissioners last week recommended approval of an ordinance that allow the township's zoning administrator to approve group day-care homes administratively, rather than go through the formal process for a special-use permit.

Under Michigan law, family day care homes - defined as homes licensed to take care of up to six children - cannot be kept out of residential neighborhoods. But group day-care homes, defined as homes licensed for up to 12 children, require the attention of local government.

Most communities have required group day-care homes to get special-use permits. But the state's new zoning enabling law, which went into effect last summer, requires the permits to be issued if the location is governed by township or county zoning, and the group day-care home meets state-specified requirements.

The change in the law does not affect cities, such as Mt. Pleasant, Clare or Alma, or villages, such as Lake Isabella or Shepherd.

The primary state requirement is spacing, according to township Zoning Administrator Woody Woodruff. The state specified that a local permit must be granted if the home is farther than 1,500 feet away from another licensed group day-care home, adult foster-care group home, drug-treatment center, or community corrections center or halfway house.

Woodruff said as zoning administrator, he can easily determine how far a proposed group day-care home is from other uses. He said he sees no need for a full-blown special-use permit process.

"If they meet the spacing requirements," Woodruff said, "I will approve their permit."

Up until now, Union Township had required applicants to go through the long and somewhat cumbersome and expensive special-use process. That process involves notifying neighbors through the mail, placing an ad in the newspaper, holding a public hearing and taking public comments.

Most of the time, the hearings are very routine, but occasionally, neighbors appear with concerns, mainly about potential traffic and noise.

Townships and counties still may require fencing, regulate parking for the home's employees, and regulate any signs. They may limit, but not prohibit, the operation of the home between 10 p.m. and 6 a.m.

Woodruff said if the proposed group day-care home doesn't meet the state spacing requirements, applicants still could go through the special-use process.

Cities and villages still are entitles to require applicants to go through the special-use process, with planning commissioners determining if the applicants meet additional local requirements.

The change in the Union Township law is likely to go before the township board for initial action within the next month.

Michigan Report

April 21, 2007

## **COURT DISMISSES CASE AGAINST CHILD SUPPORT SYSTEM**

Dismissing a claim against the state's child support accounting and collection agency, the Court of Appeals said in a published decision released on Friday that although the state's use of interest accrued on child support payments amounts to a taking, it is of "miniscule proportions that basically amounts to nothing." Further, judges said, the amount of money collected from interest barely scratches the surface in offsetting the cost of issuing checks to recipients each month.

The opinion involved Marcelle Butler's suit against the Michigan State Disbursement Unit (*Butler v. Michigan State Disbursement Unit*, [COA docket No. 271818](#)) because it retained interest accrued from her child support payments that had passed through its system.

That process, Ms. Butler said, unconstitutionally deprives child support recipients from their property (the interest) without just compensation, amounting to a taking by the government.

Judge Henry Saad, in an opinion signed by Judges Joel Hoekstra and Michael Smolenski, agreed that keeping the interest payments is essentially a taking.

However, the judges said, a 2003 opinion by the U.S. Supreme Court, *Brown v. Legal Foundation of Washington*, directs the court to consider not only the government's gain from the taking, but, more importantly, the property owner's loss in deciding whether and to what extent the owner should be compensated for his or her loss.

In this case, the MISDU collected only 83 cents of interest in all of 2005 from Ms. Butler's child support income, less than the 86 cents it costs to mail a single child support payment.

Since Ms. Butler's net loss is negative, the trial court was correct in ruling that state need not offer any compensation for its taking.

Michigan Report

April 21, 2007

## **STATE EMPLOYMENT NUMBERS FOR MARCH IN MIDDLE OF PACK**

Michigan did not gain the most jobs, nor did it lose the most, for the month of March, according to a [report](#) by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics released on Friday. However, along with Mississippi, Michigan had the second highest unemployment rate for March at 6.5 percent.

The state is also one of four states that had their nonfarm employment decrease over the year. Indiana, Ohio and Wisconsin were also included in that category.

The national unemployment rate stayed at 4.4 percent from February to March, but that rate is below March 2006 when unemployment was at 4.7 percent.

For the month, the bureau said nonfarm payroll employment increased in 47 states in March and decreased in three states along with the District of Columbia. California had the largest gain with 18,000 more people working, followed by Florida with 16,400, Texas with 15,000, Tennessee at 12,400, Indiana with 12,000, Missouri at 10,800, followed by Ohio with 10,000.

Percentage-wise, Utah had the largest increase in employment at plus .7 percent, followed by South Dakota and Wyoming with plus .5 percent a piece. Indiana, Kentucky, Missouri and Tennessee each also had plus .4 percent.

Montana had the lowest unemployment rate in the nation for March at 2 percent, followed by Utah at 2.4 percent, Hawaii at 2.5 percent, and Nebraska and Wyoming each at 2.6 percent.

For the month, the largest employment declines came from South Carolina with 1,200 jobs lost, Mississippi with 1,000 and Nebraska with 600. The largest percentage losses were experienced in Mississippi, Nebraska, and South Carolina, where each reported a .1 percent drop.

In March, the Midwest still posted the highest unemployment rate at 4.7 percent, though all regions posted lower unemployment than they during the same time last year.

## **Michigan/Mississippi Still Leading In Unemployment**

MIRS, Friday, April 20, 2007

Michigan and Mississippi continue to lead the nation in unemployment, according to data released today by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS).

Mississippi recorded a 6.9 percent unemployment rate from March 2006 to March 2007 while Michigan recorded an unemployment rate of 6.5 percent. Last March, Michigan was ranked 48th in the nation for unemployment, but this year it stands at number 49 (See "[Michigan Unemployment 48th In Nation](#)," 4/21/06).

Even though Michigan continues to rank high in unemployment levels, the state's unemployment rate has decreased from the 2005-2006 comparison. Last year the BLS recorded Michigan's unemployment at 6.8 percent and it's now down to 6.5 percent.

Nationally, the unemployment rate was unchanged in March at 4.4. percent, but decreased from the 4.7 level from a year ago, according to the BLS. Over the year, jobless rates were down in 36 states and the District of Columbia, up in 9 states, and unchanged in five states.

Montana recorded the lowest unemployment rate in March 2007, 2.0 percent, according to the BLS. The states with the next lowest rates were Utah at 2.4 percent, Hawaii at 2.5 percent, and Nebraska and Wyoming at 2.6 percent each.

# Bridge cards still are on callers' minds

Port Huron Times Herald

April 21, 2007

**Dena from Port Huron:** "To Jim from Port Huron regarding the Bridge card: I do sympathize with Jim's stand on this. Then, it occurred to me that maybe the person who purchases cigarettes with the Bridge card spent their adult life gainfully employed and suddenly found themselves without a job, due to factory closings and that type of thing. If this person had been gainfully employed, they too were taxpayers and supported people receiving assistance. So, in a sense, that would make it money they put in, (which they would) have every right to. Not all of the people on the Bridge cards have always been on welfare. It wasn't very long ago that I was driving down the street and saw a teenager digging food out of a trash can (in Port Huron). We are losing sons and daughters in battle every day in Iraq - what really irritates me is this petty, nit-picking on these smaller issues, when we have so many larger issues at hand."

*Petty nit-picking surely isn't necessary; though, we should keep an eye on how our tax dollars are used - on large and small scales.*

**Sue from Marysville:** "Regarding the Bridge card: I know a few people who have Bridge cards. When they get their allotted amount, they sell it and get the money for it and do not use it for the intended things. Those are the people who should not have a Bridge card. I did report one of them, but it didn't do any good."

**Gilbert from Kimball Township:** "Regarding the Bridge card: What is the income level to have one? Also, is there a picture ID on the card, or just a name? Can anyone use it once it's issued?"

*Our friends at the Department of Human Services in Lansing had this to say: The Bridge card doesn't have a picture ID, and there isn't a specific income level; You have to qualify either for the Family Independence Program or the Food Assistance Program, and the amount of assistance is based on income and family size. Only the person named on the card should use it, unless that person has an authorized representative to make transactions on their behalf.*



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**April 23, 2007**

## **New Measures of Poverty (1 Letter)**

To the Editor:

We applaud you for urging the Census Bureau to adopt a more realistic measure of poverty in “Counting the Poor” (editorial, April 17).

The alternative recommended by the National Academy of Sciences would be a vast improvement, but even this measure grossly underestimates “the extent to which the poor cannot afford the requisites of modern life.”

Our research shows that on average, families need an income of about twice the federal poverty level, or roughly \$40,000 for a family of four, to meet basic needs. In a high-cost city like New York the figure is over \$50,000, whereas in the rural South the figure is in the low thirty-thousands.

Even if the recommendation is adopted, leading to a poverty threshold of \$22,841 for a family of four, the official poverty measure will still be a measure of deprivation and severe hardship rather than a minimal, decent standard below which no one should fall.

Nancy K. Cauthen

Deputy Director

National Center for Children in Poverty, Columbia University

New York, April 17, 2007

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## Flint school board

Electing old and new faces best strategy for this body

### FLINT

#### THE FLINT JOURNAL FIRST EDITION

Sunday, April 22, 2007

The Flint schools have had a stressful 18 months under Superintendent Walter Milton Jr., who won't be around to see how his far-reaching reforms work out - having taken the top school post in Springfield, Ill.

It will be up to the Board of Education to judge what's good or bad about the changes he installed, not always with sufficient attention to detail and buy-in from staff.

The latter also can be said of some of the board incumbents running in the May 8 election. They, too, could have been more questioning of Milton's methods, which produced some helter-skelter student shifts and other innovations that often showed too little concern for how students and parents were affected.

It's not necessarily that their motives are wrong, but good intentions also require a commensurate ability to think strategically so wise policy is set. Board members should be willing to lead, but must recognize, too, that they are accountable for the district's management and to its customers. Unfortunately, increasing numbers of them have been exiting the system and subsequently worsening its deficit.

With the above in mind, The Flint Journal's Editorial Board believes new leadership is needed on the nine-member board, not a wholesale change, but additions that would add strengths and different perspectives. Our recommendations for the five seats available follow.

One-year term: Jennifer Dillard, 34, has strong professional and parenting experiences that give her grass-roots knowledge of the district and many of the troubled families it serves. She is a Children's Protective Services supervisor for the Genesee County Department of Human Services who has been active in the schools individually and with her church. A supporter of the schools' reform plan, she says it could have been carried out more smoothly. Billing herself as solution-focused, Dillard stresses the need to get parents involved and their children in the classroom.

Two-year term: Michael D. Cross, 39, has the big-picture-thinking skills too lacking on the board now. He also shows a temperament to analyze issues based on data, not emotion. Yet his participation in a student mentoring program reveals both compassion and a passion to see the schools improve. Owner of a veterinary business, Cross is also director of the veterinary technology program at Baker College. The credentials this Southwestern High graduate offers should not be overlooked by voters.

Three four-year terms: Tracey L. Fountain, Stephanie Robb Martin and John L. Topping Jr.

Fountain, 37, a manager for the Shiawassee County Department of Human Services, and Robb Martin, 45, a licensed psychologist and private practice therapist, were both appointed to the board, Fountain only last August. A supporter of the schools' reform plan, Fountain is increasing her participation in discussion, something that should come easily with her strong people skills and natural interest that comes with two children in the district. She speaks for more accountability on the part of staff. Status quo for her is to keep on a path of change and improvement.

Robb Martin's ability to build consensus seems apparent from her being named board president as an appointee. The case she makes for continuity of leadership with Milton's departure would be helped with her election. Even with new members Robb Martin shows a flexibility to adjust, all the while committed to moving the district to a higher level.

Topping, 62, an attorney, would offer a different vision than the two incumbents, but with no less desire for

raising the schools' performance. He would be a questioning voice, but in a responsible way, to the reform plan changes.

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